1 April 1981

NOTE FOR: [redacted] STA

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A marvelous Galbraith memoir snippet, worth reading (attached), including his own

> First Law of Intelligence: You cannot know the intentions of a government that doesn't know them itself.

(As our analysis proceeds concerning where the Indians are going in their nuclear program, we should keep in mind another passage: "Indian politics has its own uncontrollable dynamic; as such it proceeds independent of any possible external influence.")

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THE INDIA YEARS:

# POWER FROM AFAR

## THE MEMOIRS OF JOHN KENNETH GALBRAITH: PART ONE

*John Kenneth Galbraith was not always an adviser to Presidents and a seer to be reckoned with in economic and political matters. He was born seventy-two years ago on a farm in Canada, graduated from Ontario Agricultural College, and went to work in the lower reaches of the Department of Agriculture during the Depression.*

*If success came early — by 1941 he was administering price controls under FDR (where one of his employees was a young man named Richard Nixon) — Galbraith soon developed the knack of keeping success in perspective. A casualty of wartime bureaucratic maneuvers in Washington, he went on to a second career in journalism before returning to academia as a professor of economics at Harvard. While there, in 1958, he published his best-known work, The Affluent Society.*

*In 1960, Galbraith was on intimate terms with two contenders for the Democratic presidential nomination, Adlai Stevenson and John Kennedy, and friendly with a third, Lyndon Johnson, as readers will learn next week.*

*As Part One of the excerption of Galbraith's forthcoming memoir, A Life in Our Times, opens, Kennedy has been elected President and is about to make his friend, not an eminently vulnerable chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers close to home, but an eminently removed yet unusually influential ambassador to India.* —Ed.

By John Kenneth Galbraith

President Kennedy was pleased to have me in his administration as he took office in 1961, but at a suitable distance, such as in India. This saved him from a too close identification with my extensively articulated economic views. At his very first press conference in Los Angeles after his nomination in 1960, he was asked if he and the Democratic party could now be considered committed to the ideas in my book *The Affluent Society*. He evaded with skill and grace. A few days after the election he asked Arthur Schlesinger if I wanted to be chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers. Schlesinger mentioned my interest in India. Kennedy, Arthur said afterward, seemed far from distressed.

* * * *

On March 27, 1961, shortly before departing for India, I had lunch at the Metropolitan Club in Washington with G. Lewis Jones, a foreign service officer of conservative temperament, then the assistant secretary of state for Near East and South Asian affairs. He told me that he considered past or intended CIA activities in India a blot on the democratic processes we praised and affirmed. He urged me to inform myself and bring them to an end. Lewis Jones was a good man.

Two mornings later I had a briefing on intelligence operations in India by the CIA. Richard M. Bissell, Jr., joined it and showed me a paper with the proposed budget for the coming year. Bissell was an economist of ability and intelligence and an early Keynesian, who, in the New Deal days, had held himself aloof from the political enthusiasms of the time. Keynes was one thing; liberal politics was something else. In consequence, his professional competence, combined with his inner conservatism, made him highly acceptable to the businessmen who were associated in later years with the Marshall Plan, and he was a particularly influential figure in its management and success. He went on to join Allen Dulles in the belief that communism anywhere called for an automatic and often unthinking response and that a system so evil allowed of any indecency in return.

Bissell that morning must have been taking time off from the final stages of the planning of the Bay of Pigs operation, if anything that anarchic could be said to have been planned. He was deputy director of the CIA for plans, this being the euphemism for clandestine operations or what, optimistically, were assumed so to remain.

CONTINUED

Bissell's list of operations both appalled and depressed me. In one sense, as I then noted, what was proposed was unimportant; it wouldn't change anything. Indian politics has its own uncontrollable dynamic; as such, it proceeds independent of any possible external influence. Nothing could be less related to result than any effort of the CIA. But the certainty of disclosure of the enterprises being proposed and the consequent effect on our relations with the Indian government (and the effect also on myself as the American ambassador) could be very damaging. Since many Indians would be involved and subject to the changing pressures of politics and conscience, such disclosure was inevitable. A large sum, well into the millions, was to be made available to help noncommunist candidates in the elections twelve months hence. Smaller amounts were to be set aside to subsidize newspapers and a few key politicians and to sustain a magazine on public affairs of adequately anticommunist temper. That night I wrote in my journal that I had been briefed "on various spooky activities, some of which I do not like. I shall stop them." It was an optimism I did not at all feel; journals can be used, when all else fails, for personal reassurance.

A day or so later — almost my last in Washington — I learned from the undersecretary of state, Chester Bowles, of the intended Bay of Pigs operation against Cuba. I reflected morbidly on the activities with which I was becoming involved. I was unhappy for the country: I was even more unhappy, alas, for myself. I was accepting what I was meant to oppose; one day I would have to answer. But as thousands before and many more since, I told myself that by keeping the job I might make a difference. Like most so persuaded, it was really that I now wanted to be ambassador. On Cuba I wrote a letter to the President urging the costs of what I called our past military and political "adventurism," as when MacArthur went to the Yalu River, the U-2 destroyed the Paris Summit, or when, as in Guatemala, seeming success was at grave cost to our reputation elsewhere in Latin America. The letter was less to persuade the President than to appease my conscience.

I was especially disturbed by one particularly insane enterprise. Long flights were being made by the CIA from the neighborhood of Bangkok over India to the northern border of Nepal. There the planes dropped weapons, ammunition, and other supplies for dissident and deeply unhygienic tribesmen who had once roamed over the neighboring Tibetan countryside and who now relieved boredom with raids back into the territory from which they had been extruded. This military action was thought to cause great distress in Peking or, as Dean Rusk still insisted, Peiping. But the tribesmen had achieved the standing of a faithful ally; to a faithful ally, in the ethic of the time, we had to be faithful regardless of the cost.

On arriving in New Delhi in April, I began a full investigation of CIA operations. I was not troubled by an open mind. I was convinced that most of the projects proposed would be useless for their own anticommunist purposes and were capable, when known, of doing us great damage as well. The local CIA station chief, an intelligent former history teacher named Harry A. Rositzke, was not strong in their defense. Neither he nor others were disappointed to learn of my opposition.

Accordingly, in May 1961, I returned to Washington with the purpose of bringing all clandestine operations in India of all kinds to an end. No subsidies to parties, politicians, or papers; no other unnecessary undercover activities. Only the normal reporting that is conducted with indifferent accuracy by all major states would remain. (This would also be subject to what, in those years, I called Galbraith's First Law of Intelligence: "You cannot know the intentions of a government that doesn't know them itself.") I wrote a memorandum detailing my objections and circulated it to those I hoped would agree. And I took it, along with my stronger oral objections, to President Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, and McGeorge Bundy. My major defense so prepared, I then tackled Richard Bissell, other senior CIA officials, and finally Allen Dulles. In letting it be known that I had carried the matter to the White House, I encouraged the impression that the President had been sympathetic, as generally he was. They knew in any case that Kennedy had heard, without countering argument, that the operations were insane.

I was prepared for a sharp struggle; in fact, it was far easier than I could have hoped. My timing, if accidental, was superb. The Bay of Pigs fiasco had left the once dangerously confident architects of clandestine operations in a severely chastened mood. Allen Dulles, when I approached him, was almost exclusively concerned with learning to whom my memorandum had gone so he could get the copies back. They were evidence against his administration of the CIA; on some matters he was more acute than on others. One of Dulles' senior subordinates did tell me, at first angrily, then tearfully, that I was turning India over to the communists I thought to reply that given the individualist, not to say anarchic, tendencies of numerous Indians, no one could wish communism such a misfortune.

All sub rosa operations, with the exception of the overflights to Nepal, were scratched. Later, with the help of Robert Kennedy, I persuaded the President to bring these to an end.

Back in Washington in the autumn of 1961, I encountered Richard Bissell one day at the Hay-Adams Hotel. He said he was leaving the government. The President had told him that after the Bay of Pigs any future mishaps would inevitably be blamed on him. He would be safer out. It was sad. A man of quietly courteous manner with a deeply intelligent face, his service as a principal architect and guide of the Marshall Plan had earned him the admiration of all so involved. As Dulles was in a post far above his intelligence, Bissell had involved himself in enterprises far below his worth. I have not, to my regret, seen him since.

EXCERPTED

JOHN KENNETH GALBRAITH IS PROFESSOR EMERITUS AT HARVARD. *A LIFE IN OUR TIMES* WILL BE PUBLISHED BY HOUGHTON MIFFLIN IN MAY.